



Draft Environmental Impact Statement
for a Geologic Repository for the
Disposal of Spent Nuclear Fuel and
High-Level Radioactive Waste

Comment Sheet

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I request that these comments be made a part of the official record.

★ SEE ATTACHED YELLOW SHEET

★ THE NEWS PAPER ARTICLE STATES CLEARLY
THE HEALTH RISK FEARS WE NEVADIANS HAVE
REGARDING THIS ISSUE.

THE BOTTOM LINE IS YUCCA MT. IS NOT,
NOT A SAFE PLACE TO STORE THE NUCLEAR WASTE.
THE DUE DILIGENCES BY THE GOVERNMENT HAS
NOT BEEN DONE. WE THE PEOPLE OF NEVADA ARE NOT
GOING TO HAVE NUCLEAR WASTE SHOVED DOWN
OUR THROATS BECAUSE CONGRESSMAN & SENATORS
FROM OTHER STATES DON'T WANT IT STORED
IN THEIR STATES EITHER, EVEN THOUGH IT WOULD
BE MUCH BETTER & SAFER.
DO THE RIGHT THING!

John Pisci

Please note: For your comment(s) to be considered in the Final Environmental Impact Statement, your comment(s) need to be received by the Department of Energy by February 9, 2000. To the extent practicable the Department will consider comments received after February 9.

General Comments about the draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain.

The DEIS violates the intent of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

- 2 • There is no alternative action presented in the DEIS normally required in an EIS. The Nuclear Waste Policy Act as amended in 1987 states that "... the Secretary [of Energy] shall not be required ... to consider the need for a repository, the alternatives to geological disposal, or alternative sites to the Yucca Mountain site;". The Department of Energy (DOE) could have and was asked (1995 scoping hearings) to consider alternative actions, and yet the DOE didn't.
- 3 • The "no-action" discussion of the DEIS is unreasonable, making on-site storage appear to be untenable. It *appears* as though the no-action discussion is designed to establish a "straw man" to give the preferred alternative (dump at Yucca Mt.) validity. The DEIS gives us no choice. There is no decision to be made, because the DEIS has make it for us. This is completely contrary to the intent of an EIS.

Insufficient transportation analysis.

- 4 • There is not clear picture of the transportation routes to be used, and specifically how the waste is to be transported. How is the public to make a decision on the impacts of the project when the transportation impacts can only be guessed? It should be crystal clear which routes are to be used, the mode of transportation, and where there will be stopping points for refueling etc. , so that exposure rates can determined and health impacts evaluated.
- Privatization is apparently still a possibility at this point, which could completely alter the transportation picture. Is this yet another unknown we are to swallow?
- 5 • The transportation casks have never been full-scale tested only 1/4 scale models were tested and the data was extrapolated using computer models to full-size. The General Atomics GA4/9 casks discussed in the DEIS have only just been licensed, but none have been made yet. It is unclear whether the tests are sufficient for all the conditions that will be encountered in cross country transit, especially through mountainous terrain.

Incomplete health impact assessment.

- 6 • It is assumed that the only radiation health impact is one of cancer fatality, "latent cancer fatality". Cancer fatality represents only one of many radiation health impacts; other possible effects are premature aging, mild mutations in offspring, excess tumors, and genetic and teratogenic effects.

Violates the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982.

- 7 • The fundamental concept of geological disposal as outlined in the act was for waste isolation. Instead the DEIS describes and "evolving" facility design based on delayed release of radioactivity by means of engineered barriers, so the site will leak. How much and when is not clear.

Inadequate evaluation of uncertainties. /

- 8 • The DEIS is full of imprecise language like "very unlikely", "sufficient quantity", "probably would", etc. How are we to make a sound decision on a project of enormous scope as Yucca Mountain when we can't be certain of the science contained within.
- 9 • All of the "understanding" of how the repository will function in the future is based on computer models, so the long-term impacts are based on arguably incomplete data fed into largely untested models. Since many of these models represent chaotic systems there can be little to no guesswork, otherwise the calculated results (long-term impacts) could bear no resemblance to reality.
- 10 • Why is it that the DOE doesn't trust computer models for nuclear weapons testing, but does for the Yucca Mountain Project? Yucca Mountain performance in the far future is at least as complex as weapons design.

Violates the Treaty of Ruby Valley.

- 11 • The DEIS fails to address the Western Shoshone protest of the use of land outlined in the 1863 Treaty of Ruby Valley with the United States. Use of their aboriginal land for the dumping of nuclear waste is outside of the scope of the treaty.
- The Western Shoshone National Council contend that their ancestors would never have signed the Treaty of Ruby Valley had they been able foresee the dumping of such a substance as nuclear waste on their land.
- The Western Shoshone Nation has declared their land, Newe Sogobia, nuclear free.

Insufficient public process.

- 12 • While there have been a number of hearings in Nevada, there will be only 10 hearings outside of Nevada. The sheer scope of the transportation portion of this project should require a public hearing in at least all major cities along the transportation routes.
- The DOE claims it would have been too costly to conduct more hearings. If this is so then why wasn't the hearing process budgeted into the entire project? It is hard to believe that the cost of good public process could even compare to the current expenditures, in the billions, to date.

U.S. concedes nuke workers likely fell sick

□ The government shifts its long-held position on the fate of many builders of atomic arms in the country.

By H. Josef Hebert
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Reversing a position held for decades, the government has concluded for the first time that many workers who built America's nuclear weapons likely became ill because of exposure to radiation or toxic chemicals, officials said Saturday.

The findings, based on a review of dozens of studies and raw medical

Please see RADIATION/2A

2A/Las Vegas Review-Journal/Sunday, January 30, 2000

Radiation

From 1A

data covering an estimated 600,000 workers at 14 nuclear weapons sites, could lead to compensation to the families of some of the workers. Many were unaware that they were being exposed to such health risks.

While the draft report of the studies did not show a direct causal link between workplace exposures and specific illnesses, it found that workers at the plants suffered higher than normal rates of a wide range of cancers and clearly were exposed to cancer-causing radiation and chemicals in the workplace.

The studies, reviewed by a special task force, examined health records and other data covering three decades of the Cold War from the late 1940s into the 1960s. An official familiar with the report emphasized it does not relate to workers today.

But the draft report, which President Clinton ordered last July, marks a reversal in the government's long-standing position that no links exist between work conducted at the Cold War-era weapons plants and later illnesses. That argument has stymied numerous lawsuits seeking compensation.

While the compensation issue has yet to be resolved, the government now is acknowledging that hundreds — perhaps thousands — of workers may well have been made sick by their working environment.

"It does appear that in the DOE complex, there is a direct link between exposure and the possibility of contamination," Energy Secretary Bill Richardson said in Davos, Switzerland, where he is accompanying President Clinton.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Richardson said the findings are preliminary and won't be completed for several months. Still, Richardson said, if the findings are borne out, "The honorable thing for the government to do is to protect its workers, past and present," including compensation.

The report said elevated rates of 22 categories of cancer were found among workers at 14 facilities in the department's atomic weapons complex. They included leukemia, Hodgkin's lymphoma and cancers of the prostate, kidney, salivary gland and lung.

"The exposures we are seeing are in excess" of those in similar population groups, a source

"(If the findings are borne out) the honorable thing for the government to do is to protect its workers, past and present."

Bill Richardson
Energy secretary

familiar with the report said. "We don't know what the cause is, but it's clearly related to exposure there (in the workplace)."

President Clinton ordered the review after the Energy Department concluded the government should compensate workers who had developed an incurable lung disease because of exposure to beryllium, a material used in nuclear weapons production.

Richardson and the White House wanted to determine if other nuclear weapons plant workers likewise should be compensated because of exposure to plutonium, uranium and a variety of radioactive or highly toxic substances. The interagency group reviewed dozens of epidemiological studies, raw health data and other documents, many of which in the past have been dismissed by the government.

The draft report makes no conclusion on compensation, which will be examined in the coming months. Recommendations are likely in the final report. One official said compensation most likely would be to families "in the hundreds, not thousands," although the number at this time remains little more than a guess.

Clinton will use the final report to develop a recommendation to Congress, which is

responsible for the money.

The draft report's conclusions were first reported Saturday by The New York Times.

Daniel J. Guttman, an attorney for the Paper, Allied-Industrial Chemical and Energy Workers Union, told The Times the government turnabout was stunning, because for years the government has marginalized the risks to the thousands of weapons plant workers.

The report's findings included workers at plutonium production facilities at Savannah River in South Carolina and Hanford in Washington state; the Rocky Flats plant near Denver, where plutonium was molded into weapons components; uranium enrichment and processing plants at the Oak Ridge, Tenn., complex; the Fernald uranium plant near Cincinnati; and the Lawrence Livermore and Los Alamos laboratories in California and New Mexico, respectively.

None of the plants still produces nuclear weapons.

In 1994, a 15-year-old lawsuit claiming radiation was the cause of cancers in Nevada Test Site workers ended when U.S. District Judge Philip Pro ruled the government was not to blame.

The families of five deceased workers and one Salt Lake City man presented the voluminous case, arguing that above- and below-ground testing in the 1950s and 1960s exposed them to harmful levels of radiation.

But Pro agreed with the government's contention that, aside from test site employment, the men had one thing in common — unhealthy lifestyles that included extremely heavy smoking histories, drinking or poor diet.

The Review-Journal contributed to this report.